

MATURE ALASKANS  
SEEKING SKILLS TRAINING

*MASST*

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Participant Manual

Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
Employment Security Division  
P.O. Box 115509  
Juneau, AK 99811-5509



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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WELCOME TO THE MATURE ALASKANS SEEKING SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM! .....	3
PROGRAM OVERVIEW.....	3
PARTICIPANT’S RESPONSIBILITIES .....	4
ENROLLMENT, INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT .....	4
LENGTH OF ENROLLMENT .....	5
IEP RELATED TERMINATIONS .....	6
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES .....	8
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES .....	10
OLDER WORKER SPECIALIST PROGRAM.....	10
PERSONNEL PRACTICES AND POLICIES .....	11
PARTICIPANT MEETINGS.....	11
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO) LAWS .....	12
DRUGS IN THE WORKPLACE .....	13
POLITICAL ACTIVITIES .....	14
DEFINITIONS .....	15
PARTICIPANT MANUAL CERTIFICATION.....	17

## WELCOME TO THE MATURE ALASKANS SEEKING SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM!

The information found in this booklet is intended to be a brief summary of the opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges you have as a participant in the Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST) Program.

As authorized by the federal Older Americans Act, the MASST Program is a *temporary employment and training program* with an emphasis on helping experienced workers return to the workforce. It is not intended to be a long term employment program. Your wages are subsidized by the U.S. Dept. of Labor while you are participating in the program. You will be asked to read and sign a “Statement of Understanding” form so that you understand the objectives of the program.

*Our* goal is to help you obtain *your* goal of finding sustainable employment!

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The MASST Program is a federally subsidized, state run program designed to accomplish these four objectives:

- Foster and promote useful part-time community service opportunities for economically disadvantaged persons who are 55 years of age or older and who may have poor prospects for employment.
- Enhance the abilities, skills, and aptitudes of participants to increase their opportunities for improved income and benefits.
- Change negative attitudes and stereotypes about older individuals through public education and demonstrated success.
- Conduct projects that promote innovative work alternatives, second career training, and the placement of participants into employment.

Eligible participants in the MASST Program are 55 years of age or older, unemployed, and low income, according to federal income guidelines. Participants are assigned to local nonprofit or public agencies, also called “host agencies,” for an average of 20 hours per week. You will be paid at the rate of \$7.15 per hour, which is the minimum wage for the State of Alaska.

While receiving training and/or updating your existing skills, you will provide a valuable service to your local community. The services provided must *not* be essential to the host agency’s operation, meaning that the agency could operate in an effective manner without the position.

## PARTICIPANT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Develop *realistic* goals for unsubsidized employment.
- Participate in developing the Individual Employment Plan (IEP), which will include a target date for employment.
- Learn skills and gain experience to qualify for unsubsidized positions, either at the training site or in the local labor market.
- Maintain a good work ethic: regular attendance, punctuality, and a desire to learn.
- Participate in evaluating and monitoring progress toward completing IEP goals.
- Register at the Alaska Job Center nearest to your work site, if possible.
- Participate in training and other job preparation activities at the Alaska Job Center or with an Older Worker Specialist (OWS), if one is available.
- Conduct an active job search through the Alaska Job Center or by contacting local employers.
- Follow-through on job referrals as instructed by the OWS or MASST staff.
- Accept an offer of unsubsidized employment compatible with IEP goals.
- After placed in unsubsidized employment, remain in contact with an OWS or a MASST representative for at least 180 days (six months).

The MASST Program is *temporary*. This means that while participating in the program, you are required to seek regular employment. If there is an Alaska Job Center accessible to where you work or live, you must register with the Job Center. You must also visit the Job Center at least every other week to perform an employment search. If you do not have a Job Center in your community, you must perform an employment search by contacting prospective employers. It is *strongly* encouraged that you make note of when you visited and to whom you spoke with at the Job Center. Visiting the Job Center will be a requirement on your Individual Employment Plan (IEP).

## ENROLLMENT, INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT

Once you are determined eligible for the MASST Program the following steps will be taken:

- 1) You will complete the Statement of Understanding, indicating that you understand the intent of the MASST Program.
- 2) You will receive an orientation to the program and a copy of this Participant Manual.
- 3) You will work with the Older Worker Specialist or a MASST representative to develop your Individual Employment Plan (IEP). The IEP will be used to identify vocational goals, training needs, needed supportive services, and for placement into a community service assignment (work experience).

- 4) Your IEP will be updated a minimum of twice per year, and could be updated more frequently, to insure that you are receiving the work experience, you need to transition into unsubsidized employment. You will receive a copy of your Individual Employment Plan once it is completed.
- 5) Job Description, Work Agreement and Work Schedule: Your supervisor will provide you with a copy of your job description, a work schedule, and an orientation to your community service assignment, which includes the host agency's personnel policies.
- 6) The MASST Program will reimburse your host agency up to \$250 for a physical examination. If you choose not to have the exam, you must sign a waiver form, which is required as part of the intake process. Results of the examination are the property of the participant. You are under no obligation to share the results with your host agency. A bill or invoice from the physician *must* be given to your host agency for reimbursement.

#### LENGTH OF ENROLLMENT

The IEP will determine the length of your enrollment in the MASST Program. Periods may vary based on individual needs. Ideally, you should not be enrolled in the program for more than one year as this should be plenty of time to gain work experience for unsubsidized employment. There may be some exceptional situations which will be handled on a case-by-case basis by an Older Worker Specialist and/or the MASST Program Coordinator.

Some host agency training sites will consider their participant(s) for job openings as they occur. It is mandatory that participants register at the nearest Alaska Job Center (it is understood that a Job Center may not be located in your area; exceptions to this policy will be made in these cases but it is expected that participants make a strong effort to search for employment with local employers.)

Federal program regulations indicate that you may be terminated from the program for not fulfilling IEP goals related to host agency assignments, training, supportive services, job referrals, job interviews, job service registration, or other job search activities. See "IEP Related Terminations" below.

The major purpose of the MASST Program is to assist individuals 55 and older to gain unsubsidized employment. It is important to have many learning experiences. Changing training sites often helps to make this possible. In general, you will gain/learn all you reasonably can from a training site assignment that lasts three to six months. Your progress in learning new skills, satisfaction, and readiness for unsubsidized employment will be explored with you and your training site supervisor.

As progress toward achieving your IEP goals is monitored, you will be expected to make suggestions, ask for counsel, and discuss resources. If MASST staff, the supervisor, and the participant agree that more training is needed to be ready for unsubsidized employment, then rotation to another training site for additional training may be considered. A transfer to a different site may be made for the purpose of increasing skills with the goal of obtaining unsubsidized employment or to meet your unique needs.

Training alternatives such as classroom training, job search training, and job search activities will also be considered.

## **TERMINATIONS**

### ***IEP Related Terminations***

Federal regulations allow for Individual Employment Plan (IEP) related terminations, but all practical steps should be taken to avoid this option.

The following are circumstances in which corrective action and possible IEP related termination might occur:

1. A situation in which a participant refuses training opportunities in the local community.
2. Refusal to accept an initial or alternative community service assignment.
3. Refusal to register to work at the local One-Stop Center, if possible.
4. Refusal to accept supportive services or referrals to resources that will help to increase the employability of the participant.
5. Refusal to participate in job search activities or workshops.
6. Refusal of job interviews that are consistent with the IEP goals.
7. Obstructive or uncooperative behavior in job interviews.

### **Corrective Action Procedures**

The corrective action procedure may be applied when one situation from the list above has occurred.

A three-step progressive procedure will be used. This procedure will always be constructive and supportive with the goal of helping the participant to be successful. At each step every attempt will be made to offer one or more options for constructive resolution so that the participant can make a choice from the available options. In the event that termination is considered, the participant will be made aware of alternative options to avoid termination. Thus, termination will only occur when the participant has refused to choose other options, leaving termination as the only alternative. At each step the participant will be provided a period of 30 days to succeed in making the corrective actions.

*Step 1-* The participant will receive a verbal warning that he/she is not following the intent of his/her IEP. The participant's supervisor will point out which circumstances listed above are being violated. Staff will provide coaching and guidance regarding steps the participant should take to be successful at fulfilling the IEP goals and possible options to resolve the concern. The participant's IEP will be reviewed with the participant to detect any possible problems regarding why the participant is not being successful or is not following through with his/her obligations in the MASST Program.

*Step 2 -* If Step 1 is not effective in resolving the problem(s), the participant will receive a written notice of corrective action needed, preferably in person. As in Step 1, the notice will be accompanied by coaching and guidance regarding the steps the participant should take to be successful and appropriate options to resolve the concern. Options would depend on the individual and might include counseling, re-assessment of needs and goals, re-evaluation of appropriateness in MASST Program, and the need for further or other social services.

(Steps 1 and 2 may be repeated at the option of the MASST Program Coordinator in consultation with the participant's supervisor prior to moving to Step 3.)

*Step 3 -* The participant will receive a written notice that previous attempts to resolve the concern have not been successful and that termination is now an option. The participant will be offered a choice of one or more options to resolve the concern, or the option of termination. Options would include, but not be limited to, those addressed in Step 2.

If it is decided that the participant is to be terminated from the MASST Program via an IEP Related Termination, the participant shall be presented, in person if possible, a letter from the MASST Program Coordinator indicating termination. The letter shall include the reasons for termination and shall address what efforts have been taken to avoid this final action.

At the point of termination, the participant will be given a written procedure on how to appeal the termination.

### ***Termination for Cause***

A participant may be terminated from the program for cause. Circumstances which warrant this type of termination may include, but not be limited to:

- Refusal to cooperate in recertifying eligibility
- Inability and/or unwillingness to perform assigned duties
- Unreasonable refusal to accept a different community service assignment
- Unreasonable refusal to accept job referrals or cooperate with the IEP
- Frequent tardiness
- Falsification by the participant of time sheets or other official records
- Insubordination
- Obscene/abusive language or inappropriate behavior
- Non compliance with substance abuse policy
- Failure to cooperate with grantee and/or host agency staff
- Refusal to register to work at the local One-Stop Job Center, if possible

### ***False or Misleading Information Termination***

If it is found that a participant has intentionally provided false or misleading information regarding eligibility onto the SCSEP program, the participant will be terminated immediately via a letter provided to the participant in person. The reasons for the termination will be explained in the letter and will include relative federal regulations, state grantee policies and procedures regarding the issue, and any other pertinent information.

### ***Over Income Termination***

If a participant is found to be over income at the annual recertification process, the participant will be provided a letter, in person, indicating the reasons why he/she was determined to be over income. The letter will include the income guidelines for the program and will allow the participant 30 days as a transition period to exit the program.

### ***Incorrect Eligibility Termination***

Incorrect eligibility determination will result in the participant's immediate removal from the program. A letter will be provided to the participant in person detailing exactly the reason of the incorrect eligibility determination.

### ***Grievance Procedures Related to Terminations***

If for any reason the participant would like to file a grievance based on any of the termination issues above, the participant will be given a written procedure on how to appeal the termination. Steps for filing an appeal are listed below:



The formal process for filing a grievance is for the participant to present the appeal in writing within 10 days of the final action to:

Rita Bowen  
MASST Program Coordinator  
Employment Security Division  
P.O. Box 115509  
Juneau, AK 99811-5509

The participant must include the following information in order to be processed:

1. The name, address, and telephone number of the person filing the charge;
2. The name, address, and telephone number of the company, employment agency, or union that the charge is filed against, and the number of employees (or union members), if known;
3. A short description of the event(s) with supporting documentation (if any) which caused the person filing the charge to believe that his or her rights were violated;
4. The date(s) the event(s) took place;
5. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of any witnesses;
6. Whether the individual has filed the same or similar charge with a state or local fair employment practice agency; and
7. The name, address, and telephone number of a person who always knows where to contact the person wishing to file a charge.
8. The complaint must be signed. Anonymous complaints will not be processed.

MASST staff shall give the participant a copy of the detailed appeal procedures upon request. The following is a general outline of what a participant may expect if he/she files a written appeal.

- The Employment Security Division will request that the participant's employer provide a written statement regarding his/her view of the situation to be submitted within 10 days.
- A representative of the Employment Security Division will hear from representatives of each side, review the appeal and provide a written determination to the participant and the employer within ten working days of submission of the statements from each side.

- If the participant believes that the Employment Security Division's determination is unjustified, the participant may request a review of the issue by the Commissioner of the Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development, who will have final say in the matter.

### **SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

The following supportive services are available to participants in limited amounts:

- Interview clothes and special clothes or tools required for the community service assignment or to transition into unsubsidized employment.
- Eye exam/glasses, if needed and it must be an approved supportive service prior to the exam. There is a \$300 limit for this supportive service.
- Other services or items that are needed to participate in community service assignment or unsubsidized employment that is not addressed above.

To obtain supportive services, the need must be included in the Individual Employment Plan. MASST staff **must** approve and authorize all supportive services in advance. It is expected that attempts to utilize community resources to provide supportive services will be addressed prior to requesting MASST funds.

### **OLDER WORKER SPECIALIST PROGRAM**

Older Worker Specialists (OWS) function as representatives for the Employment Security Division to assist with providing services to MASST participants to assist them in participating in their community service assignment and to achieve employment goals.

The Older Worker Specialist meets with you to complete your assessment and to develop your Individual Employment Plan (IEP) with you to assist in identifying an appropriate community service assignment.

Part of the Older Worker Specialist's responsibility is to meet with you and your supervisor periodically to review how your community service assignment is progressing. This review may include:

- meeting with you and your supervisor to discuss additional training you may need and how your work experience might be adjusted to better suit your training needs
- helping you find an unsubsidized job
- helping you get into a training program
- being a part of your bi-annual progress evaluation, or
- updating your individual employment plan

In general, the Older Worker Specialist functions as a representative of the Employment Security Division in trying to help make your experience in the MASST Program as meaningful as possible and to help you to transition into unsubsidized employment.

#### **PERSONNEL PRACTICES AND POLICIES**

*Salary and Hours:* As a participant, you will be paid at the State of Alaska minimum wage, which is currently \$7.15 per hour. Hours per week are usually 20. Overtime is not allowed in the MASST Program.

*Volunteering:* Volunteering at the participant's own training site performing the same duties as described in the participant's Job Description is not allowed. Volunteering is allowed when performing a completely different task or function than described in the Job Description.

*Mandatory Deductions:* Participants must contribute to Medicare, Workers' Compensation and Social Security. These deductions are automatically taken out of your pay.

*Pay Periods:* You will be paid by your host agency. Check with them regarding payroll dates and policy.

*Rules for Time and Attendance:* An attendance record must be maintained at the training site as documentation for hours reported on the financial reports. Participants are to follow the host agency's policies and procedures for attendance.

*Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Laws:* Please read about EEO laws on page 11.

*Drugs in the Workplace:* Please read the "Drug and Alcohol Policy" on page 12.

*Leave (Annual and Sick):* MASST participants are allowed sick leave, but. If you desire to make up any lost time due to an approved time away from your position, you may work up to two hours extra per day to make up the hours you were away from work. The decision whether or not to work extra hours will be yours but must be approved by, and coordinated with, your supervisor and the Older Worker Specialist, if one is available.

#### **PARTICIPANT MEETINGS**

The MASST staff or the Older Worker Specialist (OWS) may conduct periodic meetings or teleconferences to transmit information, to provide employment-related information, to provide in-service training, and to discuss other program related issues.

These meetings are mandatory.

Content of these participant meetings will include presentations by MASST staff or outside resource persons covering a variety of topics.

Training will include topics such as job seeking skills; employment opportunities; information on resources for older persons; legislation enacted, pending and proposed, which may affect participants and their peers; consumer education; health care; and retirement planning.

Participant meetings are held approximately one to two times a year, usually in the morning for three hours. Participants working in the morning will attend these meetings in lieu of their assignment. Those participants usually assigned to work in the afternoons will substitute the meeting for their normal assignment. Exceptions will be noted in the written meeting announcements sent directly to both participants and their supervisors.

### **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO) LAWS**

All aspects of the MASST Program must abide by the following laws regarding discrimination in the workplace:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin;
- the Equal Pay Act of 1963 (EPA), which protects men and women who perform substantially equal work in the same establishment from sex-based wage discrimination;
- the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), which protects individuals who are 40 years of age or older;
- Title I and Title V of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), which prohibit employment discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in the private sector, and in state and local governments;
- Sections 501 and 505 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibit discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities who work in the federal government;
- and the Civil Rights Act of 1991, which, among other things, provides monetary damages in cases of intentional employment discrimination.

If you think you have been subjected to discrimination under a Title V or Workforce Investment Act funded program or activity, you may file a complaint within 180 days from the date of the alleged violation with the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights by contacting them at:

Alaska State Commission for Human Rights  
800 A Street, Suite 204  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3669  
Anchorage Area Phone: 907-274-4692  
Anchorage Area TTY/TDD: 907-276-3177

Toll-Free Complaint Hot Line (in-state only): 1-800-478-4692  
TTY/TDD Toll-Free Complaint Hot Line (in-state only): 1-800-478-3177

Or you may file a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission at:

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
Federal Office Building  
909 First Avenue, Suite 400  
Seattle, WA 98104-1061  
Phone: 1-800-669-4000      TTY: 1-800-669-6820  
FAX: 206-220-6911

### **DRUGS IN THE WORKPLACE**

The MASST Program recognizes the importance of a safe and healthy work environment for all participants. Being under the influence of any drug and/or alcoholic beverage on the job poses serious risks to a person's health and safety and jeopardizes the public trust that has been placed in the MASST Program. Consequently, the MASST Program has developed the following policy, in accordance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988.

*Policy:* The MASST Program absolutely prohibits any use, consumption, sale or purchase, transfer or possession of any controlled substance by any participant while on duty or while on a training site or MASST premises. In addition, participants are strictly prohibited from being under the influence of alcohol and/or any controlled substance while performing training site assignments or while attending MASST sponsored training sessions or meetings. Legally prescribed medications are excluded from this prohibition and permitted only to the extent that the use of such medications does not adversely affect the participant's work ability, job performance, or the safety of the participant or others.

*Violation of Policy:* A participant who violates the above policy shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination from the program. Sanctions may include, but not be limited to, a requirement that the participant participate in a drug or alcohol abuse assistance or rehabilitation program.

*Host Agency Responsibility:* Because training sites provide day-to-day supervision for participants, those host agencies shall be required to assume primary responsibility for the enforcement of this policy as an expressed condition of their training site status. A training site which knowingly permits the violation of this policy or which otherwise fails to ensure a workplace free of drugs, and alcohol and substance abuse, shall risk the immediate loss of MASST Program funding.

**POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

No MASST participant or MASST staff person may be permitted to engage in partisan or nonpartisan political activities during hours for which they are paid with MASST funds.

If a participant has questions about political activities, please contact the MASST Program Coordinator.

## **DEFINITIONS**

There are many terms associated with the MASST Program. Here are several of those terms with a brief explanation of what they mean.

### **MASST**

Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training. This is the same program as the federal Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for the Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training, a person must be 55 or over, low income, and be an Alaska resident.

### **Intake**

Intake is used to describe the two-stage process for application and enrollment for the Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST).

### **Subsidized Job/Position**

A work experience funded by the MASST to provide you with skills to unsubsidized employment.

### **Unsubsidized Job/Position**

A job that is paid for by funds other than the federally sponsored program listed above.

### **Grantee**

The Alaska Commission on Aging

### **Host Agency**

Community service agencies that provide work experience opportunities for MASST participants.

### **IEP**

Individual Employment Plan. This plan serves as the guide to the unsubsidized job goal for all MASST participants. It will be reviewed and updated as needed on a regular basis.

### **Assessment**

An assessment will be conducted on every participant to determine the participant's needs, skills, aptitudes and goal(s) of the MASST Program. An assessment is considered part of the enrollment and intake process and is reflected in the participant's IEP.

### **USDOL**

United States Department of Labor

**Enrollee/Participant/Client**

Words used to describe those individuals enrolled in the MASST Program.

**Workforce Investment Act (WIA)**

This is a federal training program administered through the Department of Labor (DOL) and locally operated by the Alaska Department of Labor. The MASST Program is a federally mandated participant of the WIA.

**Alaska Job Centers Network/One Stops**

“One Stops” are places where a person needing employment and/or public assistance can go to find help. MASST participants are encouraged to visit their local One Stop as often as possible.



## Participant Manual Certification

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I have read and I understand the Participant Manual. Any questions I have regarding this manual will be directed to my supervisor and/or an Older Worker Specialist.

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Participant Signature

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Date

This certifies that the Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST) Participant Manual and its contents have been explained during the MASST orientation and a copy given to the MASST participant.

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Host Agency Representative or  
Older Worker Specialist Signature

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Date